

The Humanitarian Idea in Lessing's Nathan der Weise,  
Goethe's Iphigenie, and Schiller's Don Carlos.

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by

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The Humanitarian Idea in Lessing's Nathan der Weise, Goethe's Iphigenie, and Schiller's Don Carlos.

Perhaps no subject occupies the minds of the people of today more than the subject of this paper--humanitarianism. The words humanity, humane, inhuman, are heard all about us. It might almost seem that this were some new idea just presented to our minds, which had come to us with unusual forcefulness.

Religion has reverted from the idea of a formal God with certain divine attributes, which are too far removed from poor weak mortals, to be more than partially attained, to a religion which makes each individual the greatest thing in the world. Governments have changed because of this great human idea and every year sees the statute books of all countries being revised to fit this notion that the real goal of the state is the welfare of each human individual in that state. Social life has transformed itself too. No longer does the "Spanische Etiquette" prescribe rules and forms but society has come to mean right living, harmony, and a chance to develop the soul ambitions for each member of that social order.

The chief object of the intellectual life of to-day is its interest in humanity, and this interest in humanity, [and this interest in humanity] has brot with it a new working conception of humanity. <sup>1</sup> "Man has found a new place

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1. Harvard Graduate "The New Humanity" Vol. I, P. 17

for himself in the physical world, with new partnerships, alliances, affinities."

But this is not a wholly new thot either. Everywhere we have credit being given to the present generation for its promulgation of a new idea--humanitarianism. New in many phases and manifestations it certainly is but the idea itself is as old as human life and has shown itself in some way in every generation. Every generation is an intellectual advance upon the last generation, bringing in new principles and methods and another ruling idea, so we find this idea of humanity manifesting itself here and there thru the ages with an ever incréasing conception of the real truth. The history of the human race has been affected greatly by its migrations. So changes in intellectual interest will produce new conceptions and open up new fields of relationship.

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"Change of thot produces new characteristics in a race, like change of place. That which makes a new humanity is another conception of it, great enough to change its aspect, and to modify, in some respects at least, its conditions. Humanity is not at any given time what the ruling conception of it is."

So we see that humanitarianism may not be as much a new idea of the present age as it might seem. That which is new however is the changed and broadened conception of it.

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1. Harvard Graduate, "The New Humanity, vol. I, p. 17.

Perhaps even the conception is not so new as the fact that it is being more generally accepted and practised.

Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* appeared in the year 1779, Goethe's *Iphigenia* in the year 1787, and the same year saw the appearance of the third drama, with which this paper deals, Schiller's *Don Carlos*. At first that it might seem preposterous to try to put these three dramas into the same class and with the idea of discovering in each twentieth century ideas. Does not one deal with the ancient Greeks at the time of the siege of Troy, another with the time of Richard the Lion-hearted, and the third with the period of the Spanish Inquisition? True, no three plays could be found more widely separated in plot and time of action but it is also true that these three men in these three so widely different works seemed to have been imbued with this one great idea of humanity.

Perhaps it will be well then to come to an understanding of the exact meaning of this term, for there are a variety of meanings and conceptions being applied. H. S. Salt<sup>1</sup> in his article on Humanitarianism defines the word as "the study and practice of humane principles-- of compassion, love, gentleness, and universal benevolence." Or it is well to note this definition given by Wollaston in his *Religion of Nature*, published as long ago as 1759: "There is something in human nature, resulting from our

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very make and constitution, which renders us obnoxious to the pains of others, causes us to sympathize with them, and almost comprehends us in their cause, It is grievous to see or hear (and almost to hear of) any man, or even any animal whatever, in torture."

The broad idea of human interest and love as represented by these two definitions we will take as the meaning of the term as used in this paper, or, to put it more concisely, we might say that humanitarianism is humane love for a human being.

The existence of this principle has not escaped the notice of philosophers from Aristotle to the present time and it might be well here to digress long enough to glance backward and take a brief retrospect to see if this principle of humanity really has manifested itself to any extent before and whether any progress has been made in the conception of the idea.

A half century before the Christian Era we find love and compassion for all creatures as a definite command in the doctrine of Buddha. "He who is humane", says the Buddhist canon, "does not kill; this principle is imperishable." "Love to all that live" was both text and creed for Buddha himself as he is represented in the many legends which have collected around his name.

At the same time that Buddhism was flourishing in the East, Pythagoras, in the West, established a doctrine which

bears a close resemblance to Buddhism. His doctrine not only established brotherly sympathy between man and man, but also included all human nature.

As to the Greeks, I use Mr. Salts quotation from Professor Mahaffy in his Social Greece. <sup>1</sup>"With all their intellect and all their subtlety, the Greeks were wanting in heart. Their humanity was spasmodic, not constant. Their kindness was limited to friends and family, and included no chivalry to foes or helpless Slaves, Nevertheless, after the conquests of Alexander and the consequent spread of civilization, this Greek humanity became distinctly cosmopolitan;; and it was probably due to Greek influence that the Jewish sect, the Essenes, owed somewhat of the singularly humane and benevolent spirit of their institutions." The Essenes anticipated in an extraordinary degree some of the best features of modern humanitarianism. "They had in many respects", says a writer in the Encyclopoedia Britannica, "reached the very highest elevation attained by the ancient world; they were just, humane, benevolent, and spiritually minded".

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1. Prof. Mahaffy, "Social Greece"

Passing then to the next great nation which left its stamp upon the world, we find the Romans less humane than the Greeks, but even before the influence of Christianity, there was a sense of brotherhood developed because of the very size of the Roman Empire, and Roman law is not void of human ethics. The close amalgamation of all the various parts of the Empire led to much humane legislation. Terence's famous line

"Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto," prepares us for the many humanistic sentiments which we find in the writings of Lucretius, Cicero, Virgil, Ovid and all the writers of the Augustan era. Two philosophers of the first century, in Latin and Greek respectively, Seneca and Plutarch, have left writings fairly steeped in humanitarianism.

But the greatest humanitarian was of course Christ, with his teachings of brotherly love and his ideal life among his fellow men. He was the first to teach that whether one is Jew or Gentile is not the important thing but how Jew or Gentile adjust their lives to conform to the lives about them. Christianity has been the great element in the development of this new humanity. To be sure the progress has been very slow and through the next centuries there was very little to boast of--only here and there a bright spot.

In the Renaissance literature there are many traces of a revival of the spirit of compassion. Humanistic sentiments are common in More, Erasmus, Shakspeare, Bacon

and Montaigne. With the eighteenth century, however, real humanistic ethics predominate. This is the characteristic tone in the writings of such men as Thomson, Gay, Pope, Goldsmith, Shenstone, Blake, Couper, Voltaire and others.

At the end of this century we find in Germany, especially, a very great epoch--the storm and stress Period. This was a revolution which began in literature but extended to all phases of political life as an outbreak for individuality, freedom, and progress. The intenseness of the first revolution soon gave way to a sane, well balanced but determined movement toward originality and individuality. But the influence of the epoch was very great and made it possible for the energy, ambition, idealism, and genius of the men of the next few years to express itself in many ways. This movement was not confined alone to Germany, for we find everywhere the influence of Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, d'Alenbert, Locke, Shaftsbury, Percy's "Reliques", Ossian and Shakspeare.

The three dramas, with which this paper is concerned, belong to the classic maturity, which followed this period of unrestrained enthusiasm. The three authors, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, with one other, Herder, were the leaders.

Each one had passed through a period of revolt against the customs of an age which barred all freedom of the individual and had come out of the storm with ideas tempered by experience but unchanged in the central conception of the common ideals of all society. Each of these three dramas represents the result in the individual

poet's mind of the experiences of the storm and stress.

Let us now examine these dramas individually, that we may find, if possible, definite examples of the expression of this humanitarianism. Nathan der Weise was published first, in the year 1779, and the other two followed in less than ten years. Nathan der Weise we will take up first, altho Don Carlos expresses more the transition period following the first appearance of these ideas in the Storm and Stress period.

Perhaps the greatest check to individual happiness, originality, genius and freedom is intolerance. If we were looking for one word to suggest the central theme of "Nathan" it would be this chief attribute of humanitarianism "Duldung". Herder expressed this idea earlier in the following words:

"Alle Religionen rufen uns zuletzt das höchste Wort des reinsten Schicksals zu; Ihr Völker duldet euch!" and again:

"Ihr Menschen verschiedener Sitten, Meinungen und Charakter, helft, vertragst euch, seid Menschen."

Or we might quote Leopold von Ranke as expressing the same thought a little differently:

"An die Wahrheit der geistigen Welt glauben, das ist Religion."

Lessing must have been seeking to express these thoughts when he made each of the three great religions of the time fade into insignificance beside the one great idea of the brotherhood of man. Platen characterizes this drama



especially well, when he says:

"Hier ist alles Charakter und Geist und der edelsten Menschheit Bild, und die Götter vergehen vor dem alleinigen Gott." "Because of its beautiful and humane lesson, Nathan der Weise occupies a very unique position in, not only German literature, but also the literature of the world."

Like some others before him Lessing took the old allegory of the three rings, one of which was supposed to have miraculous power, and used it to teach a lesson of tolerance and brotherly love. He, too, represents the ring as having miraculous power, which the father says will bring the favour of God and man to the wearer, if he wears it with faith in this assurance. When the brothers go to the judge that he may decide which is the miraculous ring, his decision is: "Test the power of your rival rings by emulating one another in gentleness, concord, benevolence, and zeal in the service of God." The hidden virtue will be manifest only in works of love--humanitarianism. Lessing wished to teach here the universality of the religious instinct and its office in the development of the human race. Therefore the true ring (true religion) is revealed by living in harmony with each other, in love, gentleness, good works, and devotion to God. "Lass dich unarmen, Mensch!--du bist

doch noch mein Freund?" thus does the Jew greet the Derwisch, as tho "Mensch" and "Freund were synonomous terms.

The plot of the drama was constructed therefore to express this thot of common humanity and characters were selected to promote this end. They represent different nationalities and different religions but they all have one ideal--they all desire to see beyond the creed and nationality and the differences caused thereby. They all try to see the human element as the basis of action and they all, thg in a different way, believe that the chief aim of life is good deeds. Hettner in his "Geschichte der deutschen Literatur" characterizes the drama in these glowing terms: "Es ist das hohe Lied von der Herrlichkeit, der frei in sich selbst ruhenden Menschennatur, der Triumphgesang über die Erlösung des Geistes aus den Banden des Buchstaben, die lichte Botschaft der befreienden Toleranz - und Humanitätsidee." But it is Nathan who achieves this goal. In spite of all his many griefs, for which the Christians are responsible, he does not lose his humanitarian ideas. He is even able to love his enemies to the extent that he adopts a Christian child as his own.

"So viel weiss ich nur, ich nahm Das  
Das Kind, trug's auf mein Lager, küsst'es, warf  
Mich auf die Knie und schluchzte, Gott, auf sieben  
Doch nun schon eines wieder!"

Tolerance of other races, other customs, or other thots was not known at the time that Lessing wrote "Nathan". The man to be admired now is the one who can understand other people and other beliefs than his own. But to do thjs he must be willing to take some pains and some thot. Such a thing was so uncommon as to be almost unknown in those days. Therefofe the poet represented his ideal of humanity and showed that all people have common tendencies.

As we think carefully we see that the characters of Nathan der Weise fall into two groups. The one group contains those who are disciples of the religion of humanity, the other group comprises those who follow the teachings of the church. At the head of the first group stands the colëssal Nathan. He is the real, genuine "Mensch". He has been thru the fires of experience and has come out with a sou} moulded in the form of "bigness". He has learned to think deeply and to see beyond the superficial exterior of things. His vision of the general and eternal welfare of the world has passed beyond the unessentials and, with unclouded mind, he sees the one essential--simple humanity held together by the bond of brotherly love. True to his noble creed he has brot up Recha in the same way.

But the Jew does not surpass the Mohammedon in freedom of thot and depth of soul, for Saladin and his sister Sittah also recognize only one element in a human

individual and that is the human element. Jew, or Christian, or Mohammadon are all the same at heart to these two. The fact that the unessential exterior is of a different shade, troubles them not at all.

<sup>1</sup>  
"Ich habe nie verlangt dass allen Bäumen Eine Rinde wachse," is Saladin's motto and Sitta's bitter accusation that

<sup>2</sup>  
"der Stolz der Christen sei, Christen nicht Menschen zu sein, dass nicht Christi Name verbreitet werde." reveals a heart which can go beyond the name of a sect to the heart of the individual member of the sect. Al-Hafi "der milde, gute, edle" Derwisch belongs also to this group. His view of life is expressed in these words:

"Am Ganges, am Ganges, nur giebt's Menschen, der wahre Bettler doch einzig und allein der wahre König."

Of a very different type are the other characters. First "der dicke, rote, freundliche" Patriarch, Daja, and the Templar. Each of these loves the church and his religion but not his brother. In this group too, we must place the Klosterbruder. He, like the Patriarch, represents the church but with a very different view. He is the counterpart of Nathan and, unblinded by the

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<sup>1</sup>  
Nathan der Weise 1. 2887-8.  
<sup>2</sup> Nathan der Weise, 1. 868ff.

hierachy of the church and priestly fanatacism, his vision reaches out to active human love.

While all of the characters have a part in the great lesson which Lessing is teaching here, it is Nathan and his ring story which formally expresses the dominant thought. The strange thing about this magic ring is, however, the fact that it manifests its hidden power of making its owner "pleasing to God and man" only when the owner wears it with confidence in this mysterious hidden power. Evidently then Lessing wished to teach that a true religious life must mean faith in traditions and ideas that have been handed down to us and that the symbols which have come with those conceptions should be trusted. Apparently the true ring is lost but the judge's decision is, "Let everyone of you believe that his own ring is the genuine one!" "In other words", says Professor Francke, "the religion which was handed down to us by our fathers, in which we and our people live, which has become a part of ourselves, this is the natural and most precous object of our veneration and love; this ought to be made by everyone of us the starting-point of our higher life."

It is well that Professor Francke added this last statement for at the same time that Lessing seeks to justify the presence of religious distinctions, he, at the same time, points out the common aim of all religions

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"to make pleasing to God and man". I quote again from the same author. <sup>1</sup> "Is not therefore every religion capable of being a stepping stone to noble humanity? Is not the striving for human perfection a ground on which all religions may meet? The great lesson then is, let everyone try to make his own religion the best, the finest expression of true humanity; let him strive to be a living prophecy of the coming ideal religion. Nathan is the highest type of human religion because without ceasing to be a Jew, he has at the same time raised himself above the Jew. Brought up in the most intolerant of all beliefs he has become the most tolerant of men."

This is shown very forcibly in a conversation between Nathan and the Templar. After rescuing Nathan's daughter from the fire, the Templar refuses to accept thanks from a Jew. He even seems to think his deed is not to his credit because performed for one of this despised race.

"(Bald aber fangt mich diesen Jud' an zu verwirren.)"

Wisst ihr, Nathan, welches Volk  
Zuerst das auserwählte Volk sich nannte?  
Wie? wenn ich dieses Volk nun, zwar nicht hasste,  
Doch wegen seines Stolzes zu verachten,  
Mich nicht entbrechen konnte?--seines Stolzes,  
Den es auf Christ und Muselmann vererbte,  
Nur sein Gott sei der rechte Gott!

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1. Kuno Francke: History of German Literature p.293.

Wann hat, und wo die fromme Raserei,  
 Den bessern Gott zu haben, diesen bessern  
 Der ganzen Welt als besten aufzudringen,  
 In ihrer schwärzesten Gestalt sich mehr  
 Gezeigt, als hier, alsitzt?

Nathan.

Kommt,

Wir müssen, müssen Freunde sein!--Verachtet  
 Mein Volk so sehr ihr wollt. Wir haben beide  
 Uns unser Volk nicht auserlesen. Sind  
 Wir unser Volk? Was heisst denn Volk?  
 Sind Christ und Jude eher Christ und Jude,  
 Als Mensch? Oh! wenn ich einen mehr in euch  
 Gefunden hatte, dem es g'nügt, ein Mensch  
 Zu heissen!

Tempelherr. Ja, bei Gott, das habt ihr, Nathan!

Das habt ihr!--Eure Hand!--Ich sehame mich  
 Euch einen Augenblick verkannt zu haben.

We see by the last words that Nathan's noble words  
 have made the Templar ashamed of his prejudice and  
 conceit and his eyes are opened to see the noble, superior  
 "Mensch" in the person of the despised Jew.

But to really understand Nathan's superior manhood,  
 we must read the scene with the Friar. There we learn  
 that he is able now to see all things clearly because of  
 former terrible struggles and that his present calmness  
 of mind is the result of a great victory--victory over  
 self and that the hardest duty of the human heart has  
 become an integral part of his nature--he really is

capable of loving his enemy. There he tells the story of the awful griefs which he has suffered. How his whole family had been massacred by the Christians and then he had taken the child which the Klosterbruden brought him, as he sobbed out the words:

"Gott, auf sieben

Doch nun schon eines wieder!"

Then the Lay Brother gives him the greatest tribute of which he is capable.

"Nathan! Nathan!

Ihr seid ein Christ!--Bei Gott, ihr seid ein Christ!  
Ein bess'ner Christ war nie!"

But, ah, the power of a human soul, that can answer as did Nathan:

"Wohl uns! Denn was

Mich euch zum Christen macht, das macht mir euch zum Juden!"

Such was Lessing's sermon whereby he hoped to get the believers of all religious faith to clasp hands in a fraternal bond of humanity. In his own words,

"Warum wollen wir in allen positiven Religionen nicht lieber weiter nichts, als den Gang erblicken, nach welchem sich der menschliche Verstand jedes Ortes einzig und allein entwickeln können, und noch ferner entwickeln soll, als über eine derselben entweder lächeln oder zürnen."

Turning now to the Don Carlos we find here too, many of the same thots, presented this time in a struggle,



against civil and spritual tyranny, for freedom of thot.

We have pointed out that the greatest check to individual happiness is intolerance, and that "Nathan" is the exponent of this chief attribute of humanitarianism "Duldung". Now we must go even farther back and see if these dramas allow that all have an equal right to individual happiness, for equality is the inherent fundamental principle of humanitarianism. For if one performs a humanitarian act it must be, because somewhere back of that act there is the feeling that another has an equal right to happiness and that he desires to help in the distribution of happiness. As "Nathan" is the drama of freedom along the line of religious beliefs so "Don Carlos" advocates personal and political freedom and both represent only the same broad idea of an equal humanity.

The Storm and Stress Period in German literature has been defined as <sup>1</sup>"an outbreak of individualism, an assertion of freedom, of originality, of educational progress,"

It was a period when humanity began to count. Tho this movement started with literature it soon extended to the spheres of social and political life and caused a complete revolution of all society. Schiller's "Don Cârlos" shows many traces of Storm and Stress influence, tho the early enthusiasm had passed by the time it was published. One of the many great achievements of the eighteenth

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1. Frederick Lieder

century, the idea of which is reflected in the "Don Carlos," was the change of conception regarding the monarch and his subjects. The close of the century saw kings and princes, who, like Frederick the Great and Joseph the second, desired to be "der erste Diener meines Staates", standing out in pleasing contrast to Louis the Fourteenth type of the beginning of the century, and the play shows the stage on which the old and the new ages meet.

In this light we interpret the great tenth scene of the third act, where Posa expresses his enlightened views of Philip II. The scene bears comparison with the scene in Lessing's Nathan, between Nathan and Saladin, Both scenes are climaxes of their respective plays, both deal with tolerance--Don Carlos with political tolerance, Nathan with religious tolerance--and both bring monarch and subject to an understanding of each other. As Nathan pleads before the great Saladin for religious freedom so the Marquis of Posa pleads before the mightiest sovereign of Europe for freedom of <sup>thought</sup>, and for civil rights. That Posa's ideas of government are based on humanity and individual freedom and happiness is attested in the following passages:

1.

"Ich bin nicht vorbereitet,

Gestehen, Sire, sogleich nicht vorbereitet,

Was ich als Bürger dieser Welt gedacht,

In Worte Ihres Untertans zu kleiden."

2

"Ich liebe

Die Menschheit, und in Monarchien darf

Ich niemand lieben als mich selbst."

What he cannot see in the present his faith allows him  
to see in the future.

3

"Das Jahrhundert

Ist meinem Ideal nicht reif. Ich lebe

Ein Bürger derer, welche kommen werden."

or

4

"Sanftere

Jahrhunderte verdrängen Philipps Zeiten;

Die bringen mildre Weisheit; Bürgerglück

Wird dann versöhnt mit Furstengrösse wandeln,

Der karge Staat mit seinen Kindern geizen,

Und die Notwendigkeit wird menschlich sein."

It is very significant that these words Mensch, menschlich, Menschentum, Menschheit, etc. occur an incredible number of times as do also the words Bürger, bürgerlich, and Bürgersglück. This Bürgersglück the king thinks his subjects have, but Posa's broad mind conceives of "Bürgersglück as more than:

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1. Don Carlos 3006-8
  2. Don Carlos 3037-39
  3. Don Carlos 3077-80
  4. Don Carlos 3150-55.

1

"Die Ruhe eines Kärchhofs".

He sees a time which he designates as the "allgemeinen Frühling" when "Bürgersglück" shall come as freedom of thot and liberty of conscience, a time of liberalization and humanization. This vision of humanity he tries to make the son of the Inquisition see as he cries out to him

2

"Der Mensch ist mehr als Sie von ihm gehalten."

and

3

"Werden Sie von Millionen Königen ein König."

Posa's ideal concieves of a state in which the law should not be dictated by the will of one individual but should be a kingdom where the monarch's chief aim should be the happiness of his people.

4

"Stellen Sie der Menschheit

Verlornen Adel wieder her. Der Bürger

Sei wiederum, was er zuvor gewesen,

Der Krone Zweck--ihn bride keine Pflicht

Also seiner Brüder gleich ehrwürdige Rechte."

Wenn nun der Mensch, sich selbst zurückgegeben,

Erhabne, stolze Tugenden gedeiben--

Dann, Sire, wenn Sie zum glücklichsten der Welt

Ihr eignes Königreich gemacht--dann ist

Es Ihre Pflicht, die Welt zu unterwerfen.

1. Don Carlos, l. 3162.
2. Don Carlos, l. 3188.
3. Don Carlos, l. 3200-01
4. Don Carlos, l. 3242ff.

Don Carlos holds a place distinct as being Schillers own conception of humanity evolved as the result of his more youthful productions along the same subject. Engel in his *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* describes these several early dramas thus:

<sup>1</sup>  
 "Die Räuber ist eine Proklamation der individuellen Freiheit, der Menschenrechte, 'Fiesko' ist eine Verherrlichung des republikanischen Gedankens, 'Kabake und Liebe' ist ein Protest gegen die von "den Fürstenhöfen ausgehende korruption und gegen die Knechtung des bürgerlichen Standes, 'Don Carlos' ist ein Protest der unterdrückten Volker gegen monarchischen und kirchlichen Despotismus."

This protest is spoken by Karlos, Posa, and the queen, and as Adolf Bartels in his *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* says "Das 'Sire', geben Sie Gedanken--freiheit wird fortklingen, so lange es noch eine begeisterungsfähige Jugend gibt." It is perhaps a little strange that, whereas the whole play is permeated with the aim of stern formality and the etiquette and lack of freedom of the Spanish court, yet the dominant tone is so strong that the feeling of broad humanity is ever present so that at the conclusion of the play, even the tragic ending cannot take away the feeling of joy, that the two friends have given to the world their thots and their working out of the ideal of a state upon the

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1. Engel: *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*.
2. Adolf Bartels *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* p. 516.

foundation of freedom, justice and human worth. Posa calls it

<sup>1</sup>  
"Das kühne Traumbild eines neuen Staates,  
Der Freundschaft göttliche Geburt."

and as he gives up all for his friend and this dream of a new state built on the ideals of humanity he does so with undestructible confidence in the final victory of his ideal.

<sup>2</sup>  
"Er lege Die erste Hand an diesen rohen Stein.

Ob er vollende oder unterliege--

Ihm einerlei! Er legt Hand an. Wenn

Jahrhunderte dahin geflohen, wie er,

Auf einem Thron, wie seiner, widerholen

Und ihren neuen Liebling mit derselben

"  
Begeisterung entzünden."

Joseph Kürschner expresses the thot of the play in these words: <sup>3</sup> "Und wenn nun der Nathan" damit schliest, dass sie Vertreter aller drei geoffenbarten Religionen sich über die durch Abstammung und Religion gezogenen Schranken hinweg die Hand reichen zu einem Bruderbunde echter Humanität, geknüpft durch Blutverwandschaft: durch Wohltaten und menschenfreundliche Gesinnung, so beginnt gleich das Schillersche Stück mit einem solchen Bruderbunde zwischen dem Erben einer Universalmonarshi und seinem zukünftigen Nutertan."

1. Don Carlos 4289 - 81

2. Don Carlos 428lff

3. Joseph Kürschner Don Carlos  
Einleitung P. VII

Posa is the exponent of these great ideas of freedom and humanity. He represents a friendship of the highest and purest feeling; a love and friendship which is freedom. Carlos is the youth filled with longing for humanity, freedom, and great deeds-- a fiery youthful ambition to work and accomplish. But this dream of service in his father's kingdom is shattered by the narrowness, suspicion and hampering conditions of the court. Carlos in speaking to Posa says:

<sup>1</sup>  
 "Du sprichst von Zeiten, die vergangen sind.  
 Auch mir hat einst von einem Karl geträumt,  
 Den's feurig durch die Wangen lief, wenn man  
 Von Freiheit sprach--doch der ist lang begraben.  
 Den Du hier siebst, das ist der Karl nicht mehr,  
 Der in Alcala von dir Abschied nahm,  
 Der sich vermäss in süsser Trunkenheit,  
 Der Schöffer eines neuen goldenen alters  
 In Spanien zu werden--O, der Ennfall  
 War kindisch, aber götlich schön. Vorbei  
 Sind diese Träume."

This ambitious but discouraged youth is guided to the path leading to the attainment of this ideal of service by his true friend Posa, and the play leaves with the reader a confidence in the possibilities of the human soul and in the final triumph of the ideals and longings of humanity. Ludwig Bellerma in his "Schiller"

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<sup>1</sup>  
says: "Die Zukunft freier Völker war die hohe Verkündig-  
ung des Stückes."

In the third drama of this series we see a lofty, pure, noble woman character, whom, Goethe chose to make the medium by which man should finally see true human goodness.

Each of Goethe's works represents some phase or mood of his own experience. A great passion or a significant experience generally resulted in poetic expression. In the "Iphigenie" as in his other works it is necessary to discover what phase of the subject stimulated him, if we are to get the clearest insight into his artistic purpose. "In every work of art," says Goethe, "great or small, everything, even to the minutest details, depends upon the conception."

Especially significant is this when as in the case of Iphigenie, he takes an old story and thoroughly changes the character of the heroine. Humanitarianism is the dominant tone in Goethe's Iphigenie but this is not found at all in other dramas by other dramatists dealing with this subject. The main action, the language, the style, and some of the motives, thoughts and sentiments are borrowed from Euripides and thruout the play the direct influence of the Greek is evident. With all that

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1. Bellermann: Schiller p. 111.



the Goethe drama is, in religious and moral ideals, as different from all the early dramatizations of the same subject as were the times in which they were written. The moral limitations of the Greek drama are in deep contrast with the spiritual depth and purity of the German. In the twenty two hundred years which intervened between the two plays the moral sense of Europe had developed from the restricted national ideals of the Greeks to the large international ideals of humanity in the eighteenth century, which had developed under the influence of Christianity.

1  
"Goethe endeavored to modernize a Greek tragedy in the light of the philosophic humanism, which suffused the whole century of enlightenment. He realised the incompatibility of Greek fatalism with the modern Christian conception of man's free will. The climax is brought about by an act of free will on the heroine's part. The innate nobility of the heroine's soul is alone sufficient to disperse the furies and heal Orestes, as the motto expresses it

'Alle menschliche Gestalten

Sühnet reine Menschlichkeit'

The *Iphigenia* deals with a well worn theme and characters drawn from a remote antiquity and presents them in the light of a social optimism, which was distinctly of the eighteenth century."

Of vital importance upon the drama, in perfecting this changed conception of the heroine was the Italian journey. The beauty, freedom and naturalness of Italian life gave a definite directness to his ideal for Iphegenia. In Bologna, upon seeing a picture of St. Agatha, he wrote as follows: "The artist has given to her (St. Agatha) a sound self possessed maidenhood, but yet without coldness and rudeness. I have noted the form well and shall mentally read to her my Iphigenie, and shall not allow my heroine to express anything which the saint might not utter." The beauty and grace of Italy therefore raised the conception to the height of the universally human and it is significant too <sup>that</sup> the high principles of humanity which are represented by the character of the heroine finally permeate and transform the whole environment.

This human side of Iphegenie is revealed in many places. She speaks of Thoas as "ein edler Mann".<sup>1</sup> Iphegenie never loses faith in the essential nobility of the king's character. This conception differs radically from Euripides, who represents Thoas as a rude unsophisticated barbarian, easily duped by the superior intelligence of the cunning Greeks. The actions of the German Iphegenia are determined by different ideals. Hers is the religion of humanity which, she believes, is implanted in all human beings. The king says;

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1. Iphegenie, 1. 33.

1  
 "Du glaubst, es höre

Der rohe Schtze, der Barbar, die Stimme  
 Der Wahrheit und der Menschlichkeit, die Atreus,  
 Der Grieche, nicht vernahm?"

To which the priestess answers:

"Es hört sie jeder,  
 Geboren unter jedem Himmel, dem des Lebens  
 Quelle durch den Busen rein  
 Und ungehindert fließt."

Consider too the high conception of humanity as transcending race and nationality, shown by these words:

2  
 "Nun hat die Stimme  
 Des treuen Manns mich wieder aufgeweckt,  
 Dass ich auch Menschen hier verlasse, mich  
 Erinnert."

So, inspired by this faith, Iphegenies life here among these barbarians has not been one of idle exile but has been devoted to the purification and elevation of the religious and moral life of the Scythian king and his people. Tho barbarians, their hearts are as human as all other hearts and are susceptible to the influence of high ideals. This humanizing influence has been so great upon the king that a real friendship has grown up between them and his nature has been so stirred by her high moral motives that the friendship

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deepens into love and he wishes to marry her.

Arkas, however, even more than anyone else seems to have fully appreciated this humanizing influence and that which inspires it.

1

"Doch nicht den reinen Dank,

Um dessentwillen man die Wohltat tut;

Dem frohen Blick, der ein zufriedenes Leben

Und ein geneigtes Herz dem Wirte Zeigt.

Als dich ein tief geheirnisvolles Schicksal

Vor so viel Jahren diesem Tempel brachte,

Kam Thoas dir, als einer Gottgegebenen,

Mit Ehrfurcht und mit Neigung zu begegnen;

Und dieses Ufer ward dir hold und freundlich,

Das jedem Fremden sonst voll Grausens war,

Weil niemand unser Reich vor dir betrat,

Der an Dianeus heiligen Stufen nicht

Nach altem Brauch, ein blutig Opfer, fiel."

The discontinuance, thru Iphegenie's influence, of this inhuman sacrifice, is appreciated by Arkas as being sufficient to warrant calling her life beneficent and ~~un~~ useful, even if there were not many other ways in which her character had manifested itself.

Iphegenie's chafing at her isolation, reveals equally her ambition, aims and desires. The life of a religious devotee has no charms for her, as shown by the two following passages.

2

"Frei atmen macht das Leben nicht allein."

and

<sup>1</sup>  
"Ein unnütz Leben ist ein früher Tod;

Dies Frauensicksal ist vor allen meines."

Arkas thinks she underestimates her activity. Her life has been worth while because she has brightened the king's life and caused him to become more lenient and humane toward his subjects; she has caused the old custom of sacrificing strangers to be abolished and the recent successes in wars Arkas interprets as the gratitude of the gods over the suspension of the inhuman custom. In this way her influence has introduced higher laws of humanity and these have proved a blessing to the land, and have alleviated the condition of the people, and thereby there has been a strong moral bond established between them and their revered priestess.

<sup>2</sup>  
"Und fühlt nicht jeglicher ein besser Los,  
Seitdem der König, der uns ~~W~~as' und tapfer,  
So lang geführet, nun sich auch der Milde  
In deiner Gegenwart erfreut und uns  
Des schweigenden Gehorsams Pflicht erleichtert?  
Das nemst du unnütz, wenn von deinem Wesen  
Auf Tausende herab ein Balsam träufelt?"

Another phase of Ephegenia's pure character which sees only good in mankind is the feeling toward her father. The Iphegenia of Euripides could never forgive

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1. Iphegenie: 115-16

2. Iphegenie: 133-9

Agamemnon for having given his consent to her sacrifice in Aulis, but the Iphigenie of the eighteenth century has only love and veneration for her father. She testified to this feeling in the following passage.

1

"Doch, ich darf es sagen,

In ihm hab ich seit meiner ersten Zeit,

Ein Muster des vollkommenen Manns gesehen."

Akin to the love and reverence for her father was also her conception of the gods. Her pure and noble womanhood gave her new views concerning the nature of gods and their relations to men. Contrary to the beliefs of her family, she conceived of the gods as true, just, and beneficent, that they loved and conferred blessings upon the race of men, and required that men love in obedience to their laws. See what she says to Thoas:

2

"Von Jugend auf hab ich gelernt gehorchen,

Erst meinen Eltern und dann einer Gottheit

Und fälligst fühlt ich immer meine Seele

Am schönsten frei."

That the gods are cruel, bloodthirsty and avaricious she could never believe but her conviction saw the influence of gods as ever beneficent.

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1. Iphigenie 401-3

2. Iphigenie 1825-8

1  
 "Um meinetwillen hab ich's nie begehrt.  
 Der misversteht die Himmlischen, der sie  
 Blutgierig wahn<sup>"</sup>t; er dichtet ihnen nur  
 Die eignen gransamen Begierden an.  
 Entzog die Gottin mich nicht selbst dem Priester?  
 Ihr war mein Dienst willkommener als mein Tod."

This last line emphasizes again the humanitarian idea of service. Compare also the preceding quotation with the following:

2  
 "Denn die Unsterblicher lieben der Menschen  
 Weit verbreitete gute Geschlechter  
 Und sie fristen das flüchtige Leben  
 Gerne dem Sterblichen, wollen ihm gerne  
 Ihres eigenen, ewigen Himmels  
 Mitgemessendes fröhliches Anschauen  
 Eine Weile gönnen und lassen."

With this we have the oft quoted words of Pylades:

3  
 "Die Götter rächen  
 Der Väter Missetat nicht an den Sohn;  
 Ein jäglicher, gut oder böse, nimmt  
 Sich seinen Lohn mit seiner Tat hinweg,  
 Es erbt der Eltern Segen, nicht ihr Fluch."

There could surely be no better expression of the ideals of humanity than these.

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1. Iphigenie: 523-28
  2. Iphigenie: 554-60
  3. Iphigenie: 713-17

This kindness of the gods is not however some ethereal conception for the superior beings only. That the human ideal can be equally as kindly is manifested thruout the play by the fact that Iphegenie has only tenderness, compassion and forgiveness for Orestes. There is never a word of complaint or blame. Notice her first anxious question.

1  
"Sage mir

"  
Vom Unglückseligen! sprich mir von Orest!

and again

2  
"Unseliger, du bist in gleichem Fall

"  
Und fühlst, was er, der arme Flüchtling, leidet!"

or

3  
"O, wenn vergossnen Mutterblutes Stimme

"  
Zur Holl' hinab mit dumpfen Tönen ruft,

Soll nicht der reinen Schwester Segenswort

"  
Hilfreiche Götter vom Olympus rufen?"

The same broadness of mind and sympathy is discovered in Orestes. At the end of the play he offers himself as the champion of all strangers, that rights of hospitality may be established in Schœchia. He strives for the same ideals which his sister has sought to introduce in this foreign land, namely the abolition of human sacrifices and the recognition of the principles of humanity.

1. Iphegenie: 1050
2. Iphegenie: 1071-2
3. Iphegenie: 1164-67



1

"Und lass mich nicht allein für unsere Freiheit,  
Lass mich, den Fremden, für die Fremden kämpfen!"

In the end all Iphegenie's humane ideals are finally realized and the establishment of the rights of hospitality between the Greeks and the Schythians shows that she has performed a real service to humanity.

2

"Ein freundlich Gastrecht walte

Von dir zu uns:"

-----

"Und seh ich an dem Ärmsten eure Tracht:  
Empfangen will ich ihn wie einen Gott,  
Ich will ihm selbst ein Lager zubereiten,  
Auf einen Stuhl ihn an das Feuer laden  
Und nur nach dir und deinem Schicksal fragen."

The calmness of Thoas' last words "Lebt wohl!" shows how her beneficent influence has so changed his heart that he can now win this moral victory over himself.

As has been suggested before, these three dramas were the outcome of the humanitarian ideas which had been swaying Europe with ever increasing force during the latter half of the eighteenth century. As is always the case, the leading spirits of the times revealed the maturing ideas. Lessing and Goethe were working on Nathan and Iphegenie respectively at the same time and the two "Hohelieder der Humanität" were completed within

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1. Iphegenie: 2050-51
2. Iphegenie: 2153-4
3. Iphegenie:

a very short time of each other. Goethe's "Mit inniger Seele fall ich dem Bruder nun den Hals, Moses! Prophet! Evangelist! Apostel, Spinoza oder Machiavelli" might have served Lessing for a motto as well as the Latin one which he did choose.

There is however a fundamental difference to be seen. Nathan shows man as a personality to be appreciated regardless of religion, race or nationality. Iphigenie has all this and goes one step farther than unprejudiced love for all men. Real tolerance and forbearance can only be achieved by a heart of pure humanity, only by the "ganz reine Mensch" whose own purity and faith in purity must save and heal. Pure humanity alone atones for all human fault. This was the message which was written on the flyleaf of a copy of Iphigenie dedicated to the actor Krüger in 1827.

"Was der Dichter diesem Bande  
 Glaubend, hoffend anvertraut,  
 Wird' im Kreise dieser Lande  
 Durch des Künstler Wirken laut!  
 So im Handeln, so im Sprechen  
 Liebenvoll verkünd' es weit:  
 Alle Menschliche Gebrechen  
 Sühnet reine Menschlichkeit."

So Iphigenie's service to mankind was possible thru her own exalted character. Her life filled the need of a perfectly pure and sinless personality, sacrificed

to others. That she was able to save her brother and redeem the king and his people was due to her perfect sacrifice of herself, and that too without any thought of the glory and approbation of the world.

<sup>1</sup>  
 "Ich halte nichts von dem, der von sich denkt,  
 Wie ihn das Volk vielleicht erheben möchte;  
 Allein, O Jüngling, danke du den Göttern,  
 Dass sie so früh durch dich so viel getan."

Don Carlos includes the idea of religious freedom and the recognition of the duty of the state to aid the afflicted and the unfortunate and allow individual liberty. The ties of friendship and the love for humanity are the principles of both Don Carlos and Iphigenie and in each the goal is achieved thru the actual perfection of these ideals in the heart of the hero and heroine respectively.

All three are prophecies of a time when men shall be free and live together in helpful brotherly sympathetic understanding of each other.

But not only are these three dramas alike in inner form and conception, they are also alike in outer form. They are all three a passing over to the five foot iambus. Lessing was the pioneer in introducing directly from English influence this form of verse and his influence is evident in Goethe and Schiller. Iphigenie

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was first written in prose and then rewritten in verse, and that the drama gained wonderfully in tone, impression and charity, is seen by a comparison of the two forms.

Schiller too began his dramatic work in prose but the lofty theme of the Don Carlos would lend itself only to verse.

What we see in these dramas is only the real Goethe or Schiller or Lessing, beautifying his own ideas of intellectual freedom unhampered by any religious, or social or national bias, by enclosing them in dramatic structure to bring out the common ideals of every race and of all society. From these plays we may read the dramatists' ideal man and see that the three are really one. A man, whose inner nature is always to be trusted, a man, whose very mistakes show how he is ready to struggle to win a conflict and to depend on his own resources. A man, who strives for the perfection of his individual nature and who sees that this makes him a vital part of a great whole. Don Carlos, Iphigenie, Nathan forced into organic relation with a whole society as they try to round out their own individuality, are really Schiller's and Goethe's and Lessing's ideal.

With these three great dramatists whose souls were big enough to so encompass the human race so that their dramas are for all time we must associate Herder. He too considered the advancement of mankind thru self-perfection of the individual the highest concern of life and he might have had in mind a Posa, or a Nathan, or

an Iphegenie when he said:

<sup>1</sup>  
 "Whatever belongs to the nature of our race, every possible means of its improvement and progress, this is the object which a humane man has in mind, this is the centre of his work. Since our race must work out its own destiny, none of its members has a right to be idle in this work. Every one must take part in the weal and woe of the whole, every one must willingly sacrifice his share of reason, his might of activity to the genius of the race. No one, however, can contribute to the welfare of mankind who does not make himself what he can and ought to be made. Every one, therefore, must cultivate the seed of humanity, most of all, on the bed where he himself is planted. We carry in us an ideal of what we ought to be and are not. The dross which we ought to cast away, the perfection which we ought to attain, we all know. And since we can become what we ought to be only thru ourselves and others from whom we receive or whom we affect, our own humanity necessarily becomes at one with the humanity of others."

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1. Herder: Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität.